Elsie Daniels
Feb. 22, 1990

Creative Writing - Exercise No. 2

A name. Alvin De La Perriere Todd. Daddy. Just plain unpolished Daddy. A mountaineer farmer who strove to create his niche without actually seeming to be aware of his striving. He had a natural ability to see beyond the hills surrounding him and to see beyond the other residents of farms dotting his valley deep in the north Georgia mountains.

In his later years my siblings and I began to affectionately call him Dad. The reason for the change I could not ascertain but it probably served as acknowledgement that we were all grown ups with our own children who were using the title Daddy.

When the call came from my brother saying Dad had had a stroke and was in intensive care at the small local hospital (this is where he had been for two weeks with a broken hip) I immediately

packed and headed homeward.

The following weeks of heartache drew the already close-knit family closer. The three and a half hour drive plus my teaching job gave me too little time at his hospital bedside. When my spring break came I knew where I would spend it. I told my siblings, via phone, I would be ready to give them and Mother some relief from their hospital vigil. I arrived on Friday evening to find not much change since the previous visit. At this point we were not sure how much Dad was aware of as different family members came and went. His blue-grey eyes often followed us yet his stroke had left him without speech and his long-term hearing difficulties seemed magnified. The nurses and doctors faithfully applied their skills in medicine and lent their most human touches of mercy. This was at least some comfort as he endured tubes and busy machines.

The weeks stretched into what seemed to be ever-lengthening days and especially long nights. We began to

discuss reducing the pair of bedside attendees to only one family member being there on a shorter rotating basis. The others, having given more time than I, agreed to let me stay alone on Tuesday night April 26, 1988. Throughout the quiet night hours I had time for reflections of great depth and time span. As I sat by the bed and "silently talked" to Daddy I realized we never outgrow our need for "Daddy"! The frequent rounds of the nurses gave me comfort. I felt very lucky, on my first solo watch, to have on duty the two nurses I had grown fond of as I watched them work to care for the frail body with all the modern technology and TLC available. They gave me the readings of his vital signs and shared with me their joy of working with such a pleasant, loving patient as Dad was during his early admission with a broken hip. They said he was "the Love of the 4th floor" before his stroke. I could sense their compassion in what he was now having to endure.

During the quiet times between the nurses visits I alternated between two deep emotions. One of wanting to travel back into childhood and climb into my daddy's lap. I wanted him to again bounce me on his knee and sing "The Old Grey Mare She Ain't What She Used to Be". The opposite emotion was a need to hold my dad in my arms, to comfort him as I do for one of my sick grandchildren. It was indeed a long, long night.

To bring some sense of normalcy into our time of stress I wrote of things I needed to do the next few days. My list for Wednesday, April 27th included phone calls to wish a daughter a happy "30th" birthday and to my teacher sister, one mile away. She wanted me to awaken her at 6:15 a.m. so she could go get Mother for the next solo round. She had missed several days of work and wanted to report on time this day. Her Spring Break had been spent mostly helping Mother and Dad. I was glad to be giving mine, now.

The nurses, my two favorites, came in for their last rounds before going

off duty. They saw me with my list and phone numbers and told me to wait to call my sister so I could give her an updated report on Dad's vital signs. There had been little change through the night and I saw no need to wait even the ringing phone took my attention. I glanced at my watch and wondered who would be calling a 6:10 a.m. It was our 83 year old mother saying she had awakend early, was dressed and ready to come to the hospital – a first for her at this early hour. I told her I had promised to call my sister at 6:15 and she should be on her way very shortly thereafter to transport her to the hospital. She was up. Great!

The next few minutes are a "vivid blur" – the routine checking of temperature and blood pressure suddenly turned into something I had never before experienced. Standing by the bed with the nurses I realized my phone call to the sister would have to include a message of emergency camouflaged in a way to get them there in a hurry yet in a way

to keep her from driving dangerously the four miles to get Mother and the five mile return. I decided to tell her the nurses said, "It looks like he is slipping away". As I called her at 6:13 am. I simultaneously said my silent "Goodbye Daddy" — my Daddy ---

All events have a beginning and supposedly an end. My daddy's life was one long event, as according to my World Book Dictionary an event is "a happening, especially an important happening." Perhaps it is needless to say, but it is impossible to adequately record here the many events of his 85½ years. I will attempt to show his life by writing some of his major "events" as I see them.

Of all the people I have known Alvin D. Todd, my Dad, was the best example of a person who put forth the effort to bring about the "happenings" which molded his life. He never became rich and his fame was of the minor league. Nevertheless he felt good about himself. This was most evident when

he was sharing his accomplishments with others.

His third grade education, with only three months attendance in each of the three years, had been greatly extended through extensive reading. Dad was truly a self-educated man.

I will appreciate any and all suggestions, "creative criticism" or constructive criticism.

Elsie Daniels
Feb. 22, 1990

Creative Writing - Exercise No. 2 (or 1+2)

This was written under extreme stress (home-schooling a 13 and 7 yr. old for a month; attending the funeral mon. in N. Ga. of one of my dearest friends;

so for more colloquial vocabulary

A name. Alvin De La Perriere Todd. Daddy. Just plain unpolished Daddy. A mountaineer farmer who strove to create his niche without actually seeming to be aware of his striving. He had a natural ability to see beyond the hills surrounding him and to see beyond the other residents of farms dotting his valley deep in the north Georgia mountains.

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Good start

One suggestion
open with a vivid
scene of your father's
life — to establish
him as a vital personality
before you describe his death.

JdC